Unit .22

Session .04

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

Scripture

John 9:1-7, 29-33,35-41

1 As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples asked him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" **3** "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him. **4** We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. **5** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." **6** After he said these things he spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. **7** "Go," he told him, "wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent"). So he left, washed, and came back seeing. … **29** We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don't know where he's from." **30** "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. **31** We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. **32** Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. **33** If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything." … **35** Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" **36** "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked. **37** Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." **38** "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him. **39** Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind." **40** Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and asked him, "We aren't blind too, are we?" **41** "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Spiritual blindness is the result of not seeing Jesus properly.

Option 1

Ask for three volunteers. Bring the three volunteers to your whiteboard; give each a dry-erase marker. Tell the group you're going to play a game of pictionary. Each of the three volunteers is going to draw a different picture; the rest of the group will try to guess what each one is drawing. Whoever gets the group to guess his or her drawing first wins.

Quietly, give each volunteer what he or she is going to draw. Keep it simple and similar: for example, shoe, glove, t-shirt; or, horse, goat, dog.

Now for the catch: the drawers must do their drawing blindfolded (or, if you don't have blindfolds, with their eyes closed).

Have the students go. After a while, if nobody is guessing, have the students stop and then draw their items with their eyes open (or no blindfolds). See which is easier and what makes the difference. (Note: if the activity is fun, feel free to try a few rounds; you can even take new volunteers).

Point out that the blindfolded drawing is tough; it's the blind drawers trying to lead the blind group to figure something out. In many respects, the religious leaders of Jesus' day were spiritually blind, as we will see in today's lesson. Just as figuring out the picture became much easier with a seeing drawer, following right "religion" becomes much easier with a seeing guide: in this case, Jesus Himself.

Option 2

As a large group, come up with a list of different kinds of spiritual darkness in which people can find themselves. For example, spiritual darkness might look like loneliness, despair, addiction, greed, impatience, need for people's approval: anything that demonstrates a blindness to Jesus.

Have your students get into groups of three or four. They are to pretend they are mimes. Assign each group one type of spiritual darkness from the list. One person in the group should be a mime who is experiencing that spiritual darkness. A second person is the narrator, who will be explaining what the first person is experiencing and then narrating the rest of the scene. The third person is to be Jesus; this second mime enacts how Jesus enters the life of the first mime and brings light to the spiritual darkness. A fourth person can be a supporting character, if needed.

Have students prep their skits (remember, they're mimes; no one speaks but the narrator) and then share them. Discuss how Jesus brings light to our darkness. In today's lesson, Jesus brings both physical and spiritual light into the life a blind man to show how Jesus brings light to the world.

TEACHING PLAN

Read John 9:1-7.

In Jesus' day, and somewhat in ours, the thought prevailed that all suffering was the punishment of someone's sin. So the disciples wanted to know who messed up: Had the man sinned in the womb or did his parents sin so that he was born blind? In a general sense, the disciples were not wrong for thinking this way. All brokenness and suffering in the world is certainly a result of sin, and sin always has consequences, but people had extended this principle too far. A specific sin hadn't caused this blindness, but its purpose was about to come to fruition.

- **Why are we prone to connect all suffering to a person's sins?**

The disciples asked about the specific cause of the man's blindness, but Jesus answered in terms of its purpose—this man was blind so Jesus could reveal Himself as the light of the world and do the works of God by healing this man of his lifelong blindness. Jesus broke through the man's physical blindness; similarly, Jesus' light breaks through our spiritual blindness that we may see Him in faith, be saved from our sin, and join Him in the work He is doing.

Jesus repeated a statement He made in the previous chapter: He is the light of the world (John 8:12). This statement can feel quaint or sentimental to us, but it would have been vivid for the disciples listening. With the flip of a switch, we have light anywhere we are; even our smart phones can function as flashlights. But during this time, there was no modern lighting, so once the sun set, you were in the dark. All work had to be done while there was still light outside. Jesus was saying that He is the source of light that pushes back the darkness and lets us see so that we too can do the works of God.

The same God who spoke forth light to begin the creation process in Genesis 1 has shone forth the light of Jesus to make new creations (2 Cor. 4:6; 5:17). He has done this so that we might become the light of the world, reflecting the light of Jesus (Matt. 5:14-16). Jesus tells us exactly what it means to shine light—to do good deeds in His name. When we do good works that reflect who Jesus is, God gets glory!

- **What are some ways you can be the light of Christ in your spheres of influence?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 32, DDG)

Enslaved to Sin

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines them toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God's commandments whenever possible. It isn't until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin's enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Spiritual blindness is the result of not seeing Jesus properly.

John 9

1-7. The prevailing thought of the disciples goes this way: If you obey God, you earn blessing, and if something bad happens to you, you must have done something bad. If you get an "A" on a test, you must've read your Bible faithfully. If you get sick, you must've done something terrible. If a natural disaster hits your city, someone (or a group of people) must've been sinning their socks off. In this, Jesus' disciples sounded a bit like Job's friends when they assumed that calamity befell Job because of his sin, when in actuality it was Satan's doing with the permission of God (Job 1–2; 4:7-8). But the world is not a mathematical function where if you put in a certain value, you always get a corresponding value. Sometimes good actions lead to bad outcomes, and vice versa.

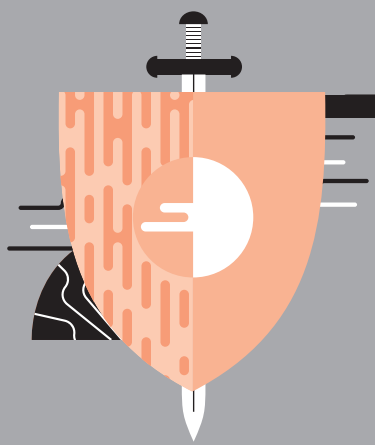
All brokenness and suffering is a result of the fall in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve's sin brought curses and death into the world, so that all suffering is a result of sin in general. Certainly, there are some illnesses and suffering directly attributed to specific sins and personal choices. In Numbers 12, for example, Miriam sinned against Moses and God struck her with leprosy. Likewise, sex outside marriage may lead to sexually transmitted diseases. But as Jesus pointed out in this passage, not all suffering is attributable to someone's specific sin.

29-33. According to the formerly blind man, no one had ever heard of anyone restoring sight to someone born blind. In fact, there is no story in the Old Testament of someone being born blind receiving sight. This healing is unique because Jesus is unique. He does what no other man could do, and He does what only God can do:

- Throughout the Bible, the act of giving sight to the blind is something only God is capable of (Ex. 4:11; Ps. 146:8).

- Giving sight to the blind was also a sign of the age to come when God would restore all things (Isa. 29:18-19; 42:5-8; see also Luke 4:18-21).

History is full of remarkable men and women who did fantastic feats and greatly impacted the world. But Jesus is unique because He isn't just any man. He is the Son of Man, the Savior who has come into the world, fully God and fully man. He lived a sinless life, bore the punishment for our sin in His death, and conquered the grave in His resurrection. He did what no one else could ever do—save us and restore us to the Father. The promise of salvation and restoration is available to anyone who will believe and trust in Him.



In Defense (p. 34, DDG)

The pool of Siloam was discovered by accident in 2004 as workers in Jerusalem dug to repair a sewer pipe that was located only a few feet above the buried ruins. Subsequent excavations by Ronny Reich and Eli Shukrun revealed that the pool was surrounded on all four sides by three tiers of steps that led down into the water. Ancient coinage and pottery at the site date from the time of Christ, placing the pool well within the context of the story of Jesus healing a blind man here (John 9:7). The pool's discovery leaves little doubt among both liberal and conservative archaeologists that the pool mentioned in John 9:7 is the pool of Siloam.[2]

TEACHING PLAN

Read John 9:29-33.

The formerly blind man's neighbors were astounded that he now could see, so they took him to the Pharisees, who questioned him about his healing. When he attributed his healing—once again on the Sabbath—to Jesus, they interrogated the man's parents to verify if he really was blind before (John 9:8-28). They didn't want to believe that this man had been healed because they refused to acknowledge Jesus' significance and power.

- **Why do you think this particular healing was so unique and made the Pharisees so upset?**

A person's speech, actions, and mannerisms reveal some things about that person. An accent can place a person from a certain part of the country. A person's clothes may reveal that person's college or vocation.

The Pharisees said they didn't know where Jesus was from (though they did know He was from Galilee; see John 7:52); they wanted to belittle Him, as if He wasn't important enough to spend the effort to get to know Him. But the healed man claimed they should be able to tell that Jesus is from God because of what He had done. It wasn't the mud or the pool of Siloam that opened his eyes—it was Jesus, and if Jesus did that, it was because God did it through Him. He reasoned that healing comes from God, so Jesus must be from God. How ironic that this unlearned blind man had to teach the Pharisees on good theology!

Jesus does the works of God because Jesus is from God (John 5:36), and if this is true, then Jesus' works show us what God cares about. What did Jesus do? Just in this narrative, He corrected a misunderstanding, taught the truth, healed the blind, befriended someone and confronted the proud. All these things show God's love for us, but they also reveal His plan to push back the darkness and undo the brokenness in the world and restore creation.

- **What does Jesus' actions in this account teach us about how we should live our lives?**

Read John 9:35-41.

The Pharisees responded to the formerly blind man's testimony by throwing him out of the synagogue (John 9:34), so Jesus sought him out. Now that he was cut off from all spiritual connection to his family and people, what would he do? Would he blame the Man who had healed him? No. In fact, upon learning that the Man was the Son of Man, the promised Messiah, he responded with faith and worship. This was the work of God in his heart.

This man went from describing Jesus as a mere man (v. 11) to calling Him a prophet (v. 17) to saying that Jesus must be from God (v. 33). But his confession here was something altogether different—he called Jesus "Lord" and worshiped Him as Lord (v. 38). The man who could not see anything earlier in the day now saw Jesus and saw Him for who He is. He didn't just receive physical sight; this man received spiritual sight. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, he confessed with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and worshiped Him. This is precisely what happens to every Christian at the moment of conversion.

- **How can we respond to Jesus' goodness and grace in our lives this week?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Spiritual blindness is the result of not seeing Jesus properly.

John 9

38. "Lord" in that day was a polite way of addressing a man, similar to "sir" or "mister," which is how the man used the word in verse 36. But "Lord" also was used to refer to the God of the Scriptures—Yahweh—and in verse 38, the man referred to Jesus as divine, as shown by his willingness to worship this Son of Man in the flesh. He didn't come to this belief on his own but by the work of God in his heart through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3; see also Matt. 16:16-17).

Activity

Today's lesson has a three-part story: 1) a man is in darkness; 2) Jesus lifts that man's darkness; 3) Jesus sends that man to spread the light. Our own stories should be similar.

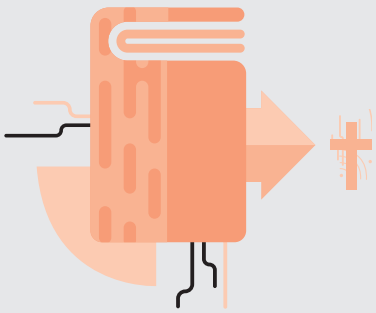
Students should prepare a three-part skit (as a group) or drawing (if they wish to be solo) showing this same pattern. In the first scene, they should portray someone in some kind of spiritual darkness. In the second scene, they should show Jesus bringing light to that dark situation; if possible, they should include a specific verse to address that darkness. In the third scene, the person who was in darkness should now share his or her newfound light with someone else. Students should try to make their scenes as realistic as possible.

Debrief their skits and drawings. Talk about the reality of each of the three stages: many people really are in spiritual darkness. Jesus really does bring light if we will trust His lordship. Finally (and this third stage may be one we Christians neglect), Christians really should bring Jesus' light to other people's situations. Ask students who in their lives needs some light brought to them. Ask your students to commit to sharing light with those people this week. If students wish to, have them set up accountability partners to share with each other next week how they brought light to those who need it (alternately, you can ask students next week if they brought light to others, and, if so, how they did it).

*Note: this lesson involves a physically blind man. Physically handicapped people are one of the least-reached groups by the church. Consider: how many churches have Braille Bibles? How many churches have some kind of closed-captioning or sign language interpreter? An alternate activity you could propose might be to come up with ways your church can actively pursue those who are in some degree of physical darkness.

(p. 33, DDG) Christ Connection

In the healing of the man who was born blind, Jesus revealed that He is the light who has come into the world. When we trust in Jesus, our sin and spiritual blindness is removed and we are able to see the light of the world in all His glory and beauty.



JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

John 9:1–7, 29–33, 35–41

JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

Spiritual blindness is the result of not seeing Jesus properly.

JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

RESPECT – Acting considerately toward people based on their God-given value and worth.

HEAD

What did the disciples think had caused the man's blindness? What did Jesus say was the reason?

Why were the religious leaders upset that Jesus had healed the man?

HEART

Every person has value and worth because God created us. Not only that, but He loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. How would seeing people the way God sees them encourage us to treat all people with respect?

The religious leaders were so upset with Jesus that they acted disrespectfully. They ignored the miracle, threw the man out of the temple and refused to believe Jesus is the Son of God. Have you ever gotten upset with someone (or with God) and treated them as though they didn't matter? Why is it important to show respect even when you are upset?

HANDS

Our culture tends to respect power, money and influence. How do we treat people who are popular, rich or famous? How do we treat people who are poor, sick or can't help us in any way? For each person below, list one way you can treat them with respect and ask God to help you do that for them this week.

- A cashier
- The student council president
- Your least favorite teacher